

Purple Heart Lance Corporal Canning was awarded. When asked by a reporter if she deemed her son a hero, Mrs. Canning swiftly replied, "He's always been a hero."

Today, in Operation Iraqi Freedom, the United States Marine Corps alone has lost 49 Texans in combat-related casualties. While our military cannot replace individuals of exceptional character like Lance Corporal Canning, I believe his service will provide a sterling example for the men and women who carry forward his tenacious fight against terror, tyranny, and treachery.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, just this last week, April 1, which would have been Lance Corporal Canning's 22nd birthday, marked another momentous occasion, his best friend, Jason Powell, graduated from the United States Marine Corps Depot that had christened Lance Corporal Canning.

Lance Corporal Canning, as LeAnn Womack said, achieved "something, something worth leaving behind." He has touched other lives and inspired a fellow man to carry the torch and legacy of the Corps. Moreover, Lance Corporal Canning helped establish a democracy in Iraq, this historic start which I was privileged to observe on January 30 in a land far, far away.

I believe if today we could hear from Lance Corporal Canning himself, as a member once and always of the United States Marines, as a member of the few and the proud, he would resonate the remainder of Toby Keith's American Soldier: "And I will always do my duty no matter what the price. I have counted up the cost, I know the sacrifice. I don't want to die for you but if dying is asked of me, I will bear that cross with honor 'cause freedom don't come free. I am out here on the front line. Sleep in peace tonight. I am an American soldier, an American, an American Soldier."

So, Mr. Speaker, we extend our prayers, our condolences to his parents, relatives, fellow students at Friendswood High School in Texas, and his beloved wife. May this American hero's devotion to his country continue to kindle our dreams and ambitions as a free and independent people.

So Semper Fi, Lance Corporal Canning. Semper Fi.

□ 1630

#### BAYLOR SCORES NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, national champions, that is what the American people can now call the Baylor University women's basketball team. Last night the Baylor Lady

Bears convincingly won the national championship by beating a talented Michigan State team 84-62. It is the second largest margin in a NCAA women's basketball final. It is the first Big 12 team, men or women's, to win a national basketball championship.

The Baylor Bears were one of only four teams in NCAA history, men or women's, to beat three number one teams in the Final 16. That accomplishment is impressive in and of itself, but what is incredible is just 5 years ago the Baylor Bears basketball team was at the bottom of the Big 12.

Mr. Speaker, the important message of this great American success story is that the values of hard work, determination and teamwork truly make a difference.

A key part of that team is Coach Kim Mulkey-Robertson, who became coach at Baylor just 5 years ago, taking over a program with a losing season and at the bottom of the Big 12 ladder. Coach Mulkey-Robertson would be the first to give credit to her tremendous and inspired players on the Baylor team, but she also deserves credit for bringing out that inspiration, and for teaching those students to be their best and then to even be better.

I congratulate Coach Mulkey-Robertson for being the first woman in NCAA basketball history to be a player on a national basketball championship team and then to be the coach of a national championship team. I believe all Americans can be proud not only of the victory on the basketball court, but the values reflected in that victory. Hard work, determination, and teamwork truly make a difference.

#### WELCOMING 2ND BATTALION HOME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, more than 400 Marines serving with the 2nd Battalion of the 24th Marine Regiment will be arriving home in Chicago on April 9, 2005, concluding their 9-month deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom with a hero's welcome at the Allstate Arena. Many organizations, businesses, and families affiliated with the 2nd Battalion will come together to show their support, appreciation to these citizen soldiers who served their country by championing the cause of freedom in Iraq.

The 2nd Battalion of the 21st Marine Regiment was activated on June 1, 2004, to support Operation Iraqi Freedom. The mobilization brought together the Headquarters, Echo, and Weapons Companies, forming the battalion. The unit deployed to Iraq in September 2004 and began conducting support and security operations in northern Babil Province, Iraq.

These dedicated marines operated out of an abandoned chicken processing plant many described as resembling a police station. Their formula for success was to blend their superb military training with many years of law enforcement expertise by their commanding officer. Lieutenant Colonel Mark A. Smith was an Indiana State police. Nearly every platoon included two or three policemen by trade, which proved invaluable in the work of the unit. The battalion used police procedures in its intelligence work, comparing anti-Iraqi forces to criminals back home.

The combination of marine training and police experience allowed the battalion to capture more than 200 insurgents during their deployment. Because of their successful nighttime raids, 2nd Battalion 24 Marines earned the nickname "The Mad Ghosts" from the insurgents operating in Babil Province. Like other U.S. forces operating in Iraq, these marines truly owned the night, and their operations continued until 2nd Battalion was relieved by elements of the U.S. Army in March.

Unfortunately, some of these brave marines made the ultimate sacrifice in the defense of our country. Thirteen marines perished during this mobilization and deployment, 12 as a result of hostile action. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and loved ones of the following marines who will not be returning home with their colleagues this weekend: Corporal Brian Prening, Corporal Robert Warns, Corporal Nathaniel Hammond, Corporal Peter Giannopolos, Lance Corporal Branden Ramey, Lance Corporal Daniel Wyatt, Lance Corporal Richard Warner, Lance Corporal Travis Wichlacz, Lance Corporal Shane O'Donnell, Private First Class Ryan Cantafio, Sergeant Matthew Adams, Lance Corporal Andrew Nowacki, and Private First Class Brent Vroman.

Mr. Speaker, these brave marines, their families and their employers back home all made sacrifices to support freedom and human rights and tolerance around the world. During their service in Iraq, Iraq became the United Nations' newest democracy. We celebrate the citizen soldiers who wear the uniform so proudly to protect their great nation.

To the men and women of the 2nd Battalion of the 24th Marine Regiment, to the unit based in Waukegan, Illinois, we offer you our heartfelt thanks for your service and sacrifice. We thank your loved ones for their sacrifice and support. Welcome home, and most importantly, Semper Fi.

#### COMMENTS ON THE EPA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.